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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/635,506	08/09/2000	Scott Faber	004704.P004	5692

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02/20/2003

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EXAMINER

MEINECKE DIAZ, SUSANNA M

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3623

DATE MAILED: 02/20/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/635,506

Applicant(s)

FABER ET AL.

Examiner

Susanna M. Diaz

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 09 August 2000.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-96 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-96 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 09 August 2000 is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☒ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) 2-4,6-10. 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

1. Claims 1-96 are presented for examination.

Specification

2. Applicant is reminded of the proper language and format for an abstract of the disclosure.

The abstract should be in narrative form and generally limited to a single paragraph on a separate sheet within the range of 50 to 150 words. It is important that the abstract not exceed 150 words in length since the space provided for the abstract on the computer tape used by the printer is limited. The form and legal phraseology often used in patent claims, such as "means" and "said," should be avoided. The abstract should describe the disclosure sufficiently to assist readers in deciding whether there is a need for consulting the full patent text for details.

The language should be clear and concise and should not repeat information given in the title. It should avoid using phrases which can be implied, such as, "The disclosure concerns," "The disclosure defined by this invention," "The disclosure describes," etc.

3. The abstract of the disclosure is objected to because it is too long. Correction is required. See MPEP § 608.01(b).

Drawings

4. The drawings are objected to as failing to comply with 37 CFR 1.84(p)(5) because they include the following reference sign(s) not mentioned in the description: 1421, 1422. A proposed drawing correction, corrected drawings, or amendment to the specification to add the reference sign(s) in the description, are required in reply to the Office action to avoid abandonment of the application. The objection to the drawings will not be held in abeyance.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

5. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

6. Claims 1-96 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lauffer (U.S. Patent No. 6,223,165 B1) in view of Weinstein et al. (US 2001/0026609 A1).

Lauffer discloses a method comprising:

[Claim 1] displaying a service provider and a service provider rate for communicating with the service provider and a real-time indication of whether the service provider is available (claim 1);

receiving a request from a first customer to communicate with the service provider (claim 1);

connecting the first customer to the service provider through a link capable of transmitting from the service provider to the first customer (claim 1);

receiving a request from a second customer to communicate with the service provider (col. 4, lines 50-54; claim 1 -- As long as the expert stays online and he/she is deemed to be available, he/she connects with customer after customer one at a time, i.e., a first customer, second customer, etc.; therefore, it is understood that the expert is connected to a customer any time the expert is online and a customer desires to communicate with him/her); and

connecting the second customer to the service provider through a link capable of transmitting from the service provider to the second customer (col. 4, lines 50-54; claim 1 -- As long as the expert stays online and he/she is deemed to be available, he/she connects with customer after customer one at a time, i.e., a first customer, second customer, etc.; therefore, it is understood that the expert is connected to a customer any time the expert is online and a customer desires to communicate with him/her);

billing the first customer automatically based on the time during which the link to the first customer is maintained (claims 14-19); and

billing the second customer automatically based on the time during which the link to the second customer is maintained (col. 4, lines 50-54; claims 14-19 -- As long as the expert stays online and he/she is deemed to be available, he/she connects with customer after customer one at a time, i.e., a first customer, second customer, etc.; therefore, it is understood that the expert is connected to a customer any time the expert is online and a customer desires to communicate with him/her);

[Claim 2] wherein the link from the service provider to the first customer is implemented through use of telephone connections (col. 9, lines 5-14; claim 1);

[Claim 3] wherein the link from the service provider to the first customer is implemented through use of the Internet (col. 9, lines 5-14);

[Claim 4] wherein the link from the service provider to the first customer is configured to transmit from the first customer to the service provider (col. 9, lines 5-14);

[Claim 5] the first customer paying an intermediary and the second customer paying the intermediary, the intermediary receiving the requests, the intermediary connecting

the service provider to the first customer, the intermediary connecting the service provider to the second customer, the intermediary performing the billing (col. 8, lines 13-16; col. 7, lines 56-59);

[Claim 6] the intermediary having a set of service providers including the service provider (claim 1); and

the intermediary performing the providing in response to a choice by the first customer of the service provider from the set of service providers (claim 1);

[Claim 7] wherein the link from the service provider to the first customer is implemented through use of the Internet or through use of telephone connections (col. 9, lines 5-14; claim 1);

[Claim 8] wherein the link from the service provider to the first customer is configured to transmit from the first customer to the service provider (col. 9, lines 5-21; claim 1);

[Claim 9] moderating transmissions from the service provider and transmissions from the first customer (col. 9, lines 5-21 -- It is understood that the connection is ended when either the expert, customer, or server hang up/disconnect);

[Claim 10] wherein the moderating is performed by the service provider (col. 9, lines 5-21 -- It is understood that the connection is ended when either the expert, customer, or server hang up/disconnect);

[Claim 11] wherein the moderating is performed by a moderator (col. 9, lines 5-21 -- It is understood that the connection is ended when either the expert, customer, or server hang up/disconnect);

[Claim 12] further comprising the moderator receiving a request from the first customer to transmit to the service provider (col. 9, lines 5-21; claim 1);

[Claim 13] further comprising the moderator granting the request from the first customer to transmit to the service provider upon payment by the first customer to the intermediary (col. 8, lines 30-40; col. 9, lines 35-36; claims 14-19);

[Claim 14] wherein the request from the first customer to transmit to the service provider pertains to conversing with the service provider (claim 1);

[Claim 15] permitting the first customer to converse with the service provider (claim 1); and

receiving payment from the first customer based on a duration of the conversing (claims 14-19);

[Claim 16] receiving a request from the second customer to converse with the service provider (claim 1);

[Claim 18] ending the conversing between the first customer and the service provider (col. 9, lines 5-21; claim 14 -- It is understood that the connection is ended when either the expert, customer, or server hang up/disconnect);

[Claim 19] wherein the request from the first customer to transmit to the service provider pertains to transmitting a question to the service provider (claim 1);

[Claim 20] permitting the first customer to transmit a question to the service provider (col. 9, lines 32-35, 49-50; claim 1); and

receiving payment from the first customer for transmitting the question to the service provider (col. 9, lines 35-36; claims 14-19);

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[Claim 21] receiving a request from the second customer to transmit a question to the service provider (claim 1);

[Claim 23] removing the first customer from the link between the first customer and the service provider, the removing performed by the moderator (col. 9, lines 5-21; claim 14 -- It is understood that the connection is ended when either the expert, customer, or server hang up/disconnect).

As per claim 1, Lauffer teaches an expert system wherein multiple customers (one-at-a-time) can pay to communicate with an expert, i.e., a service provider; however, Lauffer fails to teach the connection of both a first and second customer to a service provider at the same time. Weinstein makes up for this deficiency in his teaching of "group expert calls" (¶¶ 112, 115). An expert offers a scheduled time during which various customers can pay for the opportunity to participate in a group call with the expert. These group expert calls "facilitate the more equitable marketing of people's time on the phone" (¶ 25), thereby providing an easily accessible forum for experts to market their revenue-generating services. Both Lauffer and Weinstein provide readily accessible forums where experts can market their services to the public; therefore, the Examiner asserts that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to implement Weinstein's group expert call feature with Lauffer's expert system such that an expert can consult with both a first and second customer at the same time in order to facilitate the more equitable marketing of the

experts' time on the phone, thereby providing an easily accessible forum for experts to market their revenue-generating services.

Furthermore, as per claims 17 and 22, Weinstein discloses a waiting list feature with his group expert call system (¶ 115). This feature allows new participants to enter a group expert call when other participants disconnect, thereby increasing profit for an expert who is charging each participant by the minute. Lauffer also teaches an embodiment where customers are charged per minute of connection time; therefore, the Examiner asserts that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to utilize Weinstein's waiting list feature to enable Lauffer's moderator to queue requests to converse with the service provider (as per claim 17) as well as requests to transmit questions to the service provider (as per claim 22) in order to allow new participants to enter a group expert call when other participants disconnect, thereby increasing profit for an expert who is charging each participant by the minute.

[Claims 24-46] Claims 24-46 recite limitations already addressed by the rejection of claims 1-23 above; therefore, the same rejection applies.

[Claims 47-60] Claims 47-60 recite limitations already addressed by the rejection of claims 1-23 above; therefore, the same rejection applies.

[Claims 61-74] Claims 61-74 recite limitations already addressed by the rejection of claims 1-23 above; therefore, the same rejection applies.

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[Claims 75-96] Claims 75-96 recite limitations already addressed by the rejection of claims 1-23 above; therefore, the same rejection applies.

Conclusion

7. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Susanna M. Diaz whose telephone number is (703) 305-1337. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday, 9 am - 5 pm.

 If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tariq Hafiz can be reached on (703) 305-9643.

 Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the Receptionist whose telephone number is (703)308-1113.

 Any response to this action should be mailed to:

***Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks
Washington D.C. 20231***

or faxed to:

(703)305-7687 [Official communications; including
After Final communications labeled
"Box AF"]

(703)746-7048 [Informal/Draft communications, labeled
"PROPOSED" or "DRAFT"]

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Hand delivered responses should be brought to Crystal Park 5, 2451 Crystal Drive, Arlington, VA, 22202, 7th floor receptionist.

Susanna Diaz

Susanna M. Diaz

Patent Examiner

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February 15, 2003